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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 000045

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EUR/NCE FOR ERIC FICHTE, EUR/PPD FOR JCERIALE, EUR/ERA FOR
JOHN ROBINSON

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [IR](#) [EUN](#) [EZ](#)

SUBJECT: CZECHS WANT TO COOPERATE WITH THE U.S. "AS MUCH AS
POSSIBLE" ON IRAN.

REF: A. STATE 2659

[1B.](#) 2006 PRAGUE 0097

Classified By: Political-Economic Counselor Mike Dodman
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[¶1.](#) (SBU) Summary. Czech efforts to promote human rights and democracy in Iran are limited primarily to support for Radio Farda, an annual scholarship, a few internships, and humanitarian relief following the Bam earthquake. However, the Deputy Director of the MFA Middle East Department emphasized the importance of supporting human rights defenders in Iran and welcomed opportunities to cooperate with the United States in Iran. Czech NGO People in Need may welcome U.S. financial support to promote democratic reform in Iran. End summary.

[¶2.](#) (SBU) Poloff met with Czech MFA Deputy Director of the Middle East and Africa Department Josek Rychtar on January 16 to discuss Czech efforts to support democracy and human rights in Iran (ref A). Rychtar (who may be named Director in February 2007) said Iran is an important priority for the Czech government. He praised the United States for its efforts to support human rights defenders in Iran, and said the Czechs would like to cooperate with the U.S. "as much as possible" on Iran.

[¶3.](#) (SBU) Rychtar explained, however, that Czech efforts to promote human rights and democracy in Iran are limited. Iran is not currently one of the "priority countries" of the MFA's Transformation Cooperation Unit (TRANS), and therefore Czech NGOs do not receive government funding for programs in Iran. (Rychtar said there has been internal debate about the priority countries, and thought Iran could be a priority country in the future.)

[¶4.](#) (SBU) Nevertheless, the Czech government and Czech NGO People in Need (PIN) have supported Iranian human rights and democratic values in the following ways:

-- (U) The Czech government's primary contribution to democracy in Iran is its ongoing support for Prague-based Radio Farda. Rychtar noted this support has damaged business relations between the Czech Republic and Iran.

-- (SBU) For many years, the Czech government has provided a scholarship to an Iranian student to study in the Czech Republic.

-- (U) With funding provided by the Czech government and other funders, including USAID, PIN provided humanitarian relief following the 2003 earthquake in Bam, Iran. PIN focused on sanitation programs in IDP camps. Later, PIN

activities included rehabilitation of educational and health facilities. In 2005, PIN focused on supporting women in Bam. It opened three new schools serving girls, supported sports activities for girls, and administered an income-generation program for disadvantaged women. (PIN is no longer working in Iran.)

-- (SBU) In 2005, PIN provided internships in their Prague offices to several Iranian women.

-- (C) In April 2006, the Czech government invited well-known Iranian philosopher and publisher Rahmina Jahanbegloo to visit the Czech Republic. Unfortunately, Jahanbegloo was arrested when he attempted to depart Iran and was subsequently detained for four months. No follow-up visit has been scheduled, but Rychtar said the Czechs remain in contact with Jahanbegloo.

-- (SBU) Czech Bishop Maly, a former Czech dissident, has visited Iran to meet with members of the Christian minority there.

¶5. (SBU) Comment. People in Need is well-known for its expertise in promoting human rights and democracy in Cuba, Belarus, and Iraq. PIN officials have expressed a desire to do more in Iran, but have been unable to secure funding from the Czech government for such projects (as Iran is not one of the MFA's priority countries.) The possibility of U.S. funding might be a welcome incentive for PIN to focus on Iran.

¶6. (SBU) In addition, PIN operates a democracy training center for Iraqi NGOs, journalists, and government officials in Jordan (ref B) and has expressed a desire to expand the center to include training for others in the region, possibly including Iranians. PIN has unsuccessfully sought USAID

funding for this purpose. Post will host a democracy-themed regional workshop in March 2007. One of the goals of the workshop will be to encourage representatives of NED, Freedom House, and other U.S. and EU donors to explore opportunities for cooperation and financial support with PIN and other Czech/Central European NGOs willing to promote human rights and democracy in Iran. End comment.

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